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CIVICS EDUCATION PLAN

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2004 legislative session is underway in Olympia, and my focus is on improving our economy. We need to create good paying jobs with benefits, invest in education, and make health care more affordable.

However, an accountable government depends upon informed and engaged citizens. Edward R. Murrow once noted *"a nation of sheep begets a government of wolves."*

Unfortunately, recent studies show declines in the civic attitudes and civic engagement of young people. To keep our democracy strong, we need to ensure that the next generation understands their rights and responsibilities as citizens, where those rights and responsibilities come from, and how to exercise them.

This is why I believe we need to increase the teaching of civics in our public schools.

Most civics education today consists of only a single semester course on government – compared to as many as three courses in democracy, civics and government that were common until the 1960's.

Over the past decade, I have volunteered for the "We the People" and "Project Citizen" programs. Both of these voluntary civics programs are used in some junior high and high school classrooms. I've seen first-hand the positive results of quality civics education.

Inside, you will find shocking information about the sad state of civic knowledge and civic attitudes of many young people. Also included are my proposals to enhance civics education...so citizens will be empowered with the tools and knowledge to hold their government accountable.

As always, I welcome your suggestions, ideas and feedback.

Sincerely,

Dave Upthegrove

Dave Upthegrove



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CIVICS EDUCATION PLAN

1. Increase the amount of instruction in civics.
2. Increase professional development (training) for teachers in civics education.
3. Create a recognition program for students who demonstrate exceptional civic knowledge and involvement.
4. Enhance voting-education programs in our schools.
5. Support rigorous classroom-based testing of civics with strong accountability measures.

See inside for details on each item

Rep. Dave Upthegrove

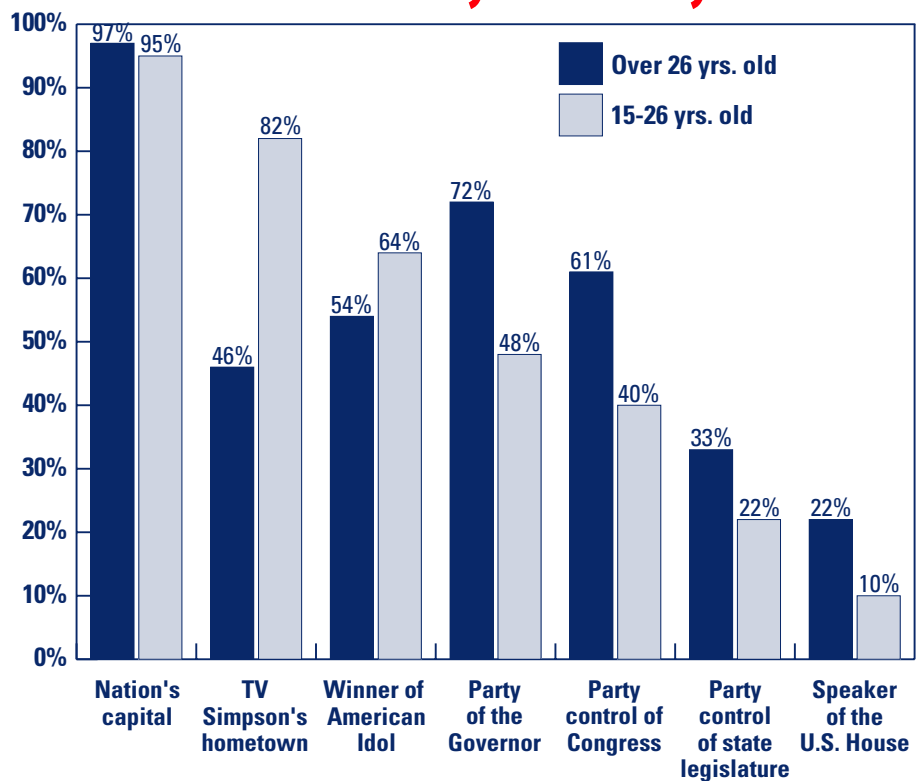
CIVICS EDUCATION PLAN

"To expect a nation to be ignorant and free is to expect what never has been, and never can be."
— Thomas Jefferson

Representative Dave Upthegrove • 33rd District

Where do we stand today? A September 2003 national survey by the U.S. Center for Civic Education measured the civic knowledge and attitudes of young people (age 15-26) compared to folks over the age of 26. The following survey results should raise your eyebrows:

What can you identify?

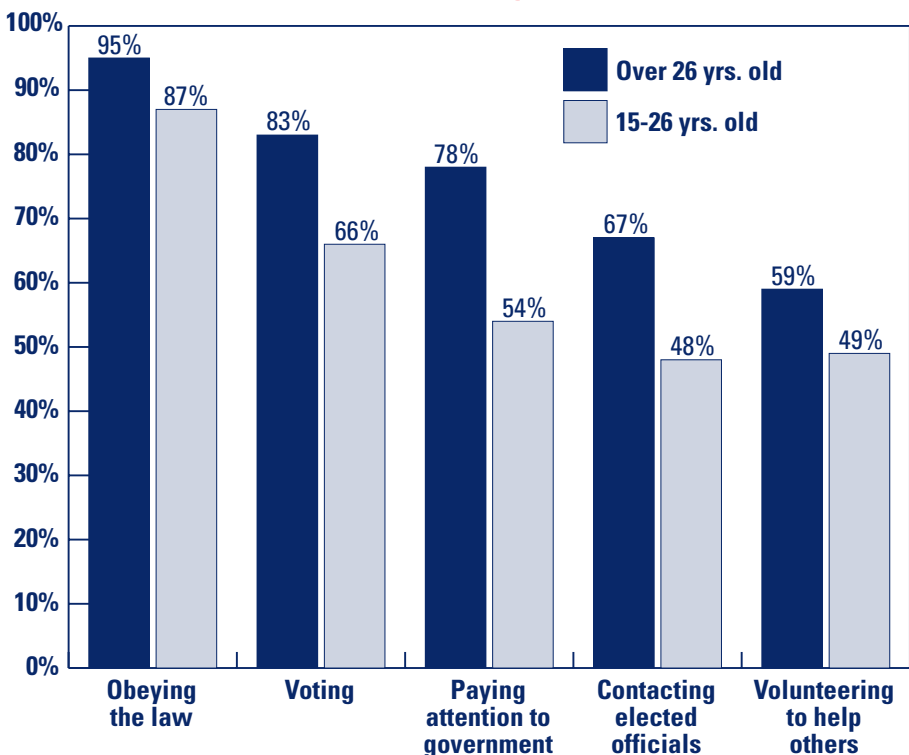


Dennis Hastert may not be able to sing like Ruben Studdard (winner of "American Idol") but as U. S. Speaker of the House, he is third in line for the Presidency. Sadly six times as many youngsters can identify the winner of American Idol than the Speaker of the House.



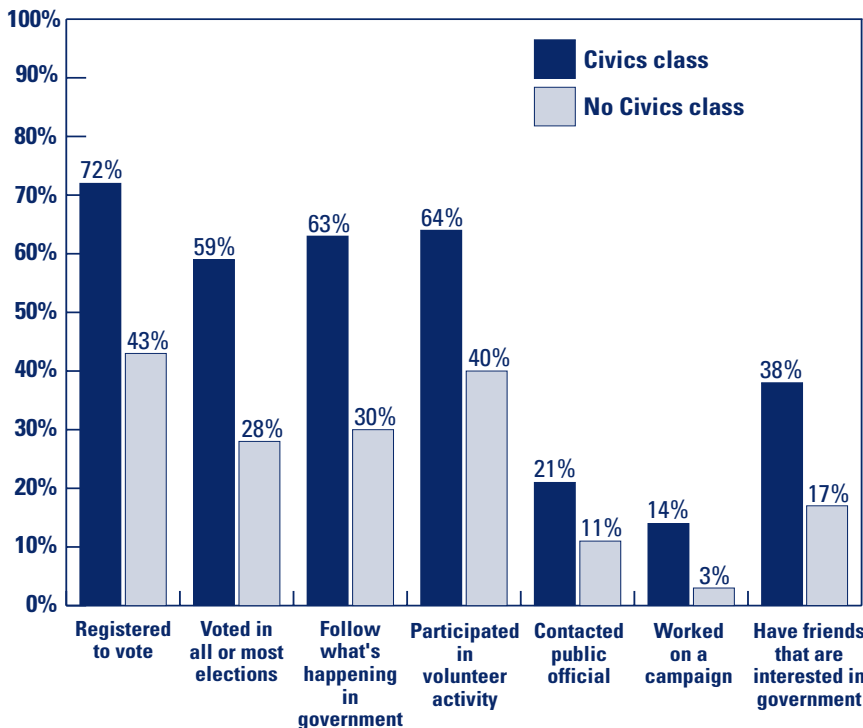
When it comes to the fundamental act of democracy, only 2/3 of the 15-26 year olds think voting is a responsibility of a good citizen.

What makes a good citizen?



The same study showed a clear link between formal civics education and future civic participation:

Civics education improves participation (15-26 age group only)



As you can see, the study showed that the likelihood of a young person voting **DOUBLES** if they have taken a civics class in school.

Proposed Solutions

Washington State needs to increase the amount of civics instruction required by students. We need to test students and hold them accountable to the same degree we do with reading, writing and mathematics. I am working with the State Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction to fulfill this vision.

I have also introduced two bills to enhance civics education:

House Bill 2814 creates a grant program for teacher training in civics.

Teachers will have the opportunity to attend national training institutes in civics education. The State will also increase civics training provided at our summer teacher institutes. Well-trained teachers are more likely to use effective teaching methods that inspire students and improve civic attitudes of young people.

House Bill 2814 also creates the "Daniel J. Evans Civic Education Award" to recognize students who demonstrate excellence in civic knowledge and show leadership in their community.

Recognizing students with this state award will motivate students and provide role models for future students.

House Bill 2875 – Enhances voting-education programs for young people.

County election officials, the Secretary of State, and several non-profit groups visit schools to talk about the importance of voting. The bill pulls together these groups, legislators and state education officials to share information and develop a strategy to ensure *every* young person is exposed to voter-education. The task force will report back to the Legislature with recommendations.

